

LIVING ORTHODOXY



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As most readers no doubt noticed, nearly everything went wrong on the last issue; we pray for better results this time! Every single piece of machinery except the typewriter malfunctioned---but at the present moment it appears that nearly all the bugs have been chased out. Even the printing of the appeal letter, to which generous responses have already begun to arrive, was delayed for over two weeks by a breakdown in the generator---a repair which threatened to cost several hundred dollars, but by the grace of God in the end was set right for about fifty. This issue is somewhat unusual, due to the great length of the Life of St. Peter: numerous usual features are either absent or greatly abbreviated.

Work on The Sacramental Life is nearing readiness for press, and we expect it to be available before the Conference convenes in Mt. Holly Springs, PA in July. It is to be hoped also that prior to that time a revision of the descriptive booklet on Agape Community will have been completed; this booklet will form a special midsection of the next issue of LIVING ORTHODOXY.

Further work is badly needed on the press building before next winter, and should there be an Orthodox carpenter with a couple of weeks free to donate to the cause, his services would be appreciated!

LETTERS FROM A CONVERT

Missionary Letters from an Eastern Orthodox Convert To Her Protestant Parents

[The first in what is expected to be a series of such letters by a convert at the Church of Our Saviour in Indianapolis, Indiana.]

Dear Parents,

After our phone conversation last night, I decided it would be easier to write to you to explain why I have become Orthodox and to respond to your questions.

I think the crux of the matter here for you is the Bible. You look at Eastern Orthodoxy and see many things Orthodox Christians do and believe which are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. You then wonder how we can justify doing and believing these things. I have some questions for you in return. Why do you think the Bible is the Word of God? Why do you think that it should contain the books that it does? Why just those books and not others as well? Or should all the books in the Bible be there? Perhaps one or two of them should not be included.

You see, for the Christians of the first several centuries, the only Bible was the Old Testament Scriptures (with some disagreement over the books known as the Apocrypha [Much more would need to be said concerning this for accuracy and clarity.—Ed.]), and various books and letters written by the Twelve Apostles and their disciples. There were differences of opinion, however, as to which books were from God and which were writings of mere men (perhaps holy, wise men, or perhaps false and heretical books---but nevertheless not divinely inspired writings). For example, even in 300 A.D. there were questions about the validity of the books of James, II Peter, II and III John, and a definite division of opinion about the Apocalypse (the Revelation of John). There was a book called the Gospel according to Peter in existence. There is the letter called the Didache, which is the letter dating about 40 A.D., sent by the Apostles after they met in council at Jerusalem (see Acts 15:1-32). There are letters from SS. Polycarp and Ignatius, disciples of St. John the Apostle, just as SS. Mark and Luke were disciples of others of the Twelve Apostles. And yet, those two Gospels were included in the Bible, but

not the letters of SS. Polycarp or Ignatius. Yet I have read those writings and do not think that they were denied admittance to Holy Scripture because they were strange, or because the authorship was doubted; rather, they seem very good and holy letters, yet they are not regarded as Scripture. And these are just some of the books and letters which might have been considered Holy Scripture. So who judges which books are human and which divine?

Historically, I can tell you the reason you read and revere the collection of books known as the Bible: The whole Church held councils in 691 and 787 A.D. (in addition to local councils in 58-65?, 364, and 419) to decide which books were Scripture, among other questions to be decided. They made their decisions which, together with the Church's confirmation and emendation, became the established Word of God. Much later, when the Protestants rebelled against and separated from the Roman Catholics (1400's A.D. on) [after the Roman Catholics had separated themselves from the One Church in the eleventh century —Ed.], they kept the doctrine about Scripture, although they discarded most of the other doctrines. And thus, you were taught that these books were the Bible, God's communication to mankind. Historically, this is why you believe the Bible to be God's Word.

So it was these Councils which, with the Church's approval, decided what was Holy Scripture. What criteria did they use? Basically, there were two criteria: (1) who wrote the book (and how certain it was that the authorship was valid, for during this period people often wrote letters under false names as St. Paul indicates in II Thess 3:17), and (2) whether or not the teachings of the book were according to Apostolic Tradition (also called Holy Tradition). I do not imagine that you have any trouble with #1. As for #2, in the early Church, the canon of Scripture was not yet fixed; heresies were rampant, and the Church often troubled. People would invent strange new doctrines and terrible heresies and start their own 'churches', 'seeking to deceive if possible even the elect.' These heretics would sometimes write their own pseudo-Apostolic books to try to lure the faithful away from the true Church. The only way Christians could judge what was the correct way to believe and act was by the teachings of the Apostles as they were taught from one generation to another, from both the verbal and written teachings of the Apostles. For the Apostles themselves taught that Christians were to obey and uphold all that the Apostles taught, whether by

word or letter. Of this we are undeniably certain, for the Bible itself teaches us this in the writings of St. Paul: 'Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold to the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our letter' (II Thess 2:15); 'Now I praise you, brethren,...that you keep the traditions as I delivered them to you' (I Cor 11:2); and 'The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things' (Phil 4:9). Some would argue that these verbal traditions were ultimately included in one or more of the writings of the New Testament. If this were so, then why would God include these instructions on verbal tradition? These three verses would then be totally superfluous and in vain. No, these verses must refer to teachings of the Apostles given in sermons and lifestyles which were not written down. It is in accordance with these traditions that the validity of the books was judged.

These were the criteria they used. Now, what about the method used to establish the Bible---a council of bishops meeting to decide a doctrinal issue? This is what the Apostles taught should be done, and the Bible bears witness to this. In Acts 15:1-32 we are told there was a doctrinal dispute over whether Gentile Christians should have to follow the Jewish rites. The Apostles met and decided basically 'No', and sent a letter to all the churches informing them of that decision. Thus, a doctrinal dispute was judged by a council of the Apostles. But that council, you may say, was composed of Apostles. What entitles bishops to do this? It is undeniably certain that the Apostles taught that the bishops they set up in each city were to do, basically, the work that the Apostles had been doing, that is: the bishop should preside over the services, appoint elders in each church, consecrate the people chosen to be deacons, and meet in councils to decide doctrinal and other disputes, etc. Thus, when a doctrinal dispute arose, bishops would gather to decide the issue. This is the tradition we have and follow. This is the foundation for believing councils to be an authority. Christians must obey---an authority, not contrary to Scripture, but in a living union with the Scriptural teachings, winnowing the wheat from the chaff of new problems, questions, and heresies.

However, a council of bishops is not necessarily infallible. To use the example in Acts again, notice that the letter to the churches did not state, 'This is the truth, the final decision, the im-

mutable law,' but rather said that this seemed good to the Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Council. By this it can be inferred that the Apostles were offering their decision for the Church's confirmation and approval: i.e., 'It seemed good to us; do you agree?' For if their decision were final, surely the Apostles would have made some statement such as 'The Holy Spirit told us so,' or 'If any disagree, let him be to you as an unbeliever.' Considering the number of disruptors of the Church at this time according to St. Paul's testimony, the Apostles must have made as strong and as powerful a statement as possible. Therefore, their use of the word 'seemed' indicates, as the Church professes, that a council's decision is not final unless the Church as a whole accepts it. When approved by the concensus of the Church, a council's decisions are dogma and true and to be followed by all Christians, including the dissenters who had held the opposit opinion. In this way, the Church has held many councils. Some were just local ones to put down some local heresy or to decide local matters of order and discipline. But several were councils representing the whole Church, whose doctrinal decisions are recognized by the whole Church as truth. To be obedient to the Scriptures, then, their decisions must be wholeheartedly adhered to and followed.

I have shown the authority of the Church to judge councils. Now let us consider her authority in matters apart from councils. It is one of the recurrent teachings of the Bible that the Church is one Body, not a bunch of disconnected fingers, eyes and feet all running around trying to find the truth on their own, but a unity, a working together, a submission to one another---and not schism after schism. Thus, the Church as a whole---each member functioning together---judges good from evil by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides through the entire Church, not through each individual. For if He singled individuals out for separate revelations, disregarding their maturity, He would be giving them great opportunity to fall into the sin of pride, which is the most subtle of sins and the most difficult to discover and purge. Thus, rather than tempt weaker Christians, He speaks through the entire Church and through some saints and Fathers who express the mind of the Church. For the gates of hell can prevail against individuals, but not the Church which Christ founded, for Jesus will not allow His Body to fall into error. If this doctrine about the Church seems strange to you, I offer to you a verse which greatly affected

me when I was trying to decide about Orthodoxy: 'the Church, the Pillar and Foundation of the Truth.' (I Tim 3:15) For the Holy Spirit, Christ said to the disciples, 'will lead you into all truth.' (John 16:13) In the Greek, that is a plural 'you', meaning that it is not a matter of the Holy Spirit leading each Christian individually and separately (for Christians can be deceived, mistaken, or just immature), but of the Holy Spirit making His will known through the concensus of the Church. For we believe in the infallibility of no man (except the God-Man Christ Jesus)---whether Pope, sincere Protestant, or holy Saint, all are subject to error. But the Holy Spirit will present the Church to Her Bridegroom without spot or wrinkle. And if you think that sincerely believed but false doctrines are not really spots or wrinkles, just read what St. Paul says to the Galatians about the error they were falling into. So the Church as one Body, speaking particularly by the experiences and advice of Saints and holy Christians of the past, guides Christians in how they ought to believe and act.

Thus, I have shown how Scripture testifies to the authority of Holy Tradition, councils, and the Church. In turn, these have a very important function to perform in the interpretation of the Scriptures. We all know how differently people have interpreted Scripture, and how easily it can be misunderstood or twisted. We therefore need all Apostolic teachings (as St. Paul indicated) to guide us in Scriptural interpretation. For how can we be certain of what Scripture seems to be saying, if we ignore the instructions in those same Scriptures about oral Tradition, councils and the Church? We would then be ignoring the very thing we are trying to understand. The Scriptures themselves indicate that interpretation of Scripture is not to be a solitary activity when they state, 'No prophecy is of private interpretation.' (II Peter 1:20) Now this verse has often been viewed as meaning that you must have the Holy Spirit to guide you. But that view of this verse does not make sense, for St. Paul was writing to a group of Christians---all of whom, of course, were partakers of the Holy Spirit. Why would he be telling them that they needed the Holy Spirit, when they already had Him? No---St. Paul was briefly touching here on the fact that Christians are not each on his own, having to find and discern the truth all by himself (although this is the basic Protestant belief). Rather, through the councils and Holy Tradition and through Her ancient teachings, the

Church holds in Herself the truth collectively, telling the false interpretations from the true, not contradicting Scripture, but adding to the understanding that Scripture gives and guiding in its interpretation.

If the idea of having the Church or councils come up with new revelations, teachings, ways of doing and believing, seems strange---then realize that the truths God teaches have never remained static for long. Enoch was translated, but God established His chosen people out of Abraham. Abraham was a friend of God, but did not have the later revelations God gave to Moses. And what Moses knew increased from his first experience at the Burning Bush, through the building of the Ark of the Covenant and the revelation of the Law. Then we have another revelation of the truth through the very history of the Israelites. And there are all the teachings of the prophets and the books of wisdom, not contradicting what went before, but supplementing and enriching it. Then there was the revelation through John the Baptist. The Lord Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, is, of course, the perfect revelation of God, and you might think that there would need be no revelation after that---just what the Apostles would teach the Church about what Jesus said and did and was. But instead, God revealed Himself to St. Paul in the Damascus road, following which St. Paul spent three years in the desert learning directly from God, not from the other Apostles (although he did check with them later to learn if he had understood correctly). And besides this, there is the testimony in Acts of there being prophets among the Christians (Acts 11:27, 13:1, 15:32, 21:9; Eph 4:11, and elsewhere in the Epistles). There is also the verse, 'If any have a tongue, an interpretation, a revelation, a doctrine, let all be done unto edifying' (1 Cor 14:26). So you can see that God continues throughout the ages to reveal His truth to His people. He has not stopped.

Therefore, we do and believe many things not specifically mentioned in the Bible because it was the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, which established (through the Holy Tradition which had been taught her) the Bible in the first place. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the bishops and the whole Church found that these books, and only these books, are God's Word. In turn, however, the Bible testifies to the authority of the Church in doctrinal matters (I Tim 3:15), and also testifies to the authority of Holy Tradition

(I Cor 11:2, Phillip 4:9, II Thess 2:15). The Scriptures and Tradition teach us about the authority and office of bishops and about the correct method for finding the answer to doctrinal questions--which is not for each person to have his own opinion, every man for himself, but is for the bishops of the Church to have a council---the Church testifying by the Holy Spirit to the truth or falsehood of the decision. These different authorities---the Bible, Holy Tradition, councils, bishops, and the Church---are not opposed to one another. They do not contradict one another or deny each other or conflict with each other. Rather, each agrees with the other and supports the other. Actually, these are much more interdependent than I have succeeded in expressing. They were founded upon one another, or, better stated: God established each of them so that they would be interrelated and interdependent, checking and balancing each other, that we might not be deceived by the evil one-'who lies in wait to deceive,' but that we might be children of God in whom there is no lie or falsehood.

That is all I am going to write about at this time. Please think and pray about what I have said here. You are in my prayers, for I know you need God's help to understand and deal with these ideas. I pray that God the Father, through His Son Jesus the Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, might grant you to find the truth and to walk in His ways. God bless you.

Love,

Your daughter and Orthodox Convert

LETTERS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, our Savior:

The March-April issue of LIVING ORTHODOXY arrived this morning. I read with a great deal of interest the page relating to an Orthodox marriage bureau. May God bless and flourish the endeavor! Here in the greater Houston metropolitan area there are only a very few men and women connected with the Synod; consequently, a man looking for an Orthodox Christian wife is in the position of someone lost in the woods. In future issues of LIVING ORTHODOXY, there could be a column of those who are both Orthodox and marriage-minded.

Sincerely,
Edward F. Lacy III
Houston, TX

Dear Father Gregory,

I want to commend you greatly for the start of an Orthodox Marriage Bureau as you mention in the latest number of LIVING ORTHODOXY. May I suggest that eventually you consider starting an adoption bureau on the lines of your proposed marriage bureau for Orthodox families which find themselves in difficult straits and without something like an Orthodox adoption bureau might find their children being raised by heretics?

Yours in Christ,
W.P. Lekanof
Seattle, WA

We accept the suggestion...Agape Community and LIVING ORTHODOXY can be considered as a point of contact and communication both for those concerned to marry within the Faith and those who for whatever reason need to secure the adoption into an Orthodox family of an infant or child (as well as for those seeking to receive such a child). We will render whatever assistance we are able in either case, in strictest confidence where this is desired.

Dear Father Gregory,

Give the blessing.

Whilst in America, I encountered your fascinating periodical, LIVING ORTHODOXY. May I bid all Agape members a most sincere 'Christ is risen!', albeit a bit early. The reason for this letter was to ask if any of you would be interested in sending letters of support to persecuted Orthodox in Russia, or sending copies of Fr. Dmitri Dudko's sermons in booklet form as an evangelizing outreach. (...) Please remember all working for L'Action Orthodoxe in your prayers and at the Liturgy. If you do not have a list of imprisoned Orthodox, I shall be delighted to send you one. Please remember that at any time, a postcard to them in their camp, prison or psychiatric hospital, is an excellent way of showing the Soviet authorities that someone cares about them and is concerned. (...) If you or any friends care to allow your address to be given, persons to whom the persecuted can write, and thus give themselves a link with the outside world, are always welcome. It is always a joy to hear from the confessors' families.

Yours in Christ,
James J. Read
Brussels, Belgium

Future issues of LIVING ORTHODOXY will, we hope, carry names and addresses for correspondence with our persecuted brethren. Those who so wish may communicate directly with James at 32, rue Marianne; B-1080, Bruxelles, Belgium.

THE LIFE
OF OUR VENERABLE AND GOD-BEARING FATHER
PETER THE ATHONITE
whose memory the Holy Church celebrates on June 12th

The holy Peter was a native of Constantinople. Of the names and rank of his parents no reliable historical information has come down to us, but he himself was one of the 'scholastics' (legal experts) of the Byzantine capitol, and furthermore held the rank of commander. Since he was experienced and skilled in military matters, the Emperor repeatedly sent him to war. During one of his campaigns to the region of greater Syria, which was bordered by Babylon and Phoenicia, in accordance with God's providence Peter suffered utter defeat. With many other warriors, he was carried off into captivity, and the barbarians transported him to Somarra, one of the mighty fortresses near Baghdad, which was situated on the banks of the Euphrates. In Somarra, they loaded the prisoners down with heavy chains and cast him into a foul dungeon, where he was kept under strict watch, forbidden to leave his cell for any reason whatsoever, and deprived of any comfort. Enduring such a bitter lot, the noble scholastic, instead of grumbling, began to examine himself unceasingly as to whether he himself might have been the cause of the great misfortune which had befallen him. And he remembered that in the past he had more than once made a vow to God to forsake the world and all therein and become a monk, but had hitherto not fulfilled his vow. Thus, acknowledging himself deserving of his misfortune, he long and bitterly accused himself, and thus endured with thanksgiving the punishment visited upon him by God.

Long did Peter languish in this bitter imprisonment and, expecting no human aid to effect his liberation, he resolved to ask help from on high, from Almighty God Who was able to free him from his heavy bonds by His infallible judgements, as He had led the Apostle Peter forth from the prison of Herod. Then Peter called to mind the great wonderworker Nicholas, for whom he had always had great love, and a profound reverence for the miracles which the saint worked for all who called upon him with faith in their need. Therefore, with many tears he began to cry out to the holy hierarch Nicholas, that ready helper of all in distress, and he said: 'Well do I know, O holy wonderworker, that I am unworthy to receive forgiveness from God and

release from this bitter captivity, for many times have I shown myself to be a liar before Him. I know that I justly find myself in this vile dungeon, and therefore I dare not entreat Him for my freedom, and that He no longer be angered with me. But I call upon thy sanctity, O holy father, for it is thy holy wont to comfort them that are subject to great need, and th lighten their distress and suffering when they call upon thee from the fulness of their souls. To thee, O holy Nicholas, even I now flee with bitter tears and supplication. Thee do I appoint as mediator in my behalf, and my surety from this day forward before our compassionate Lord that, if it pleaseth Him to effect my liberation through thine entreaty, I shall forsake all the cares and sorrows of the world, and shall even not return to my native land, but shall depart straightway to great Rome and there, in the Church of the pre-eminent Apostle Peter, spend the remaining portion of my life, having taken the monastic tonsure, that, according to the measure of my strength I may serve my Creator and God, the all-compassionate Benefactor, and be well-pleasing unto Him.'

Thus spake the man of God with much sorrow and sadness in his prayers to the holy hierarch Nicholas the Wonderworker. And to his fervent entreaties the holy Peter also added fasting and vigil, so that once he partook of no food for the space of a whole week. Then, at the conclusion of the prisoner's intense prayer, the great Nicholas, the great helper of all who call upon him, appeared to him in a dream and said: "Brother Peter, I have hearkened to thy petition; I know the tribulation of thy heart, and have besought God, the lover of mankind, in thy behalf; yet for thy past negligence in the fulfilment of thy vows, He also shall delay in fulfilling what I have asked Him, and perhaps He shall effect the salvation of thy soul in some other way. Yet, since we have the commandment: 'Ask, and it shall be given unto you' (Matt 7:7), we shall patiently knock on the gates of His loving-kindness and love for mankind, in the hope that He will fulfil our petition without fail if it indeed will be to our profit." Thus, the great Nicholas then commanded the holy Peter to have patience in his trials and, ordering him to strengthen himself with food, he vanished. Thereafter, Peter increased his struggles of fasting and prayer, and St. Nicholas soon appeared to him again, this time with a visage suffused with grief. 'Believe me, Peter my brother,' he said, 'I have not ceased to beseech God and to try to stir up His love for thee, but I know not according to what judgements He will

deign to free thee from this place. Betimes our most compassionate Lord, being mindful of what is good for us, benefits us slowly, that we remember His grace received from Him with labor and after a long time. Perhaps He doth desire that our request remain unfulfilled. In that case, I will refer thee to one of His friends, a worthy and mighty intercessor before Him. Let us ask this holy one to aid us in our prayers before God, and I am sure that God will fulfil our joint request concerning thee if only thou wilt give thy firm promise to do what thou hast vowed.'

Then Peter said to St. Nicholas in amazement: 'Most holy Master! Can there really be anyone whose supplication is more readily hearkened to by God, when all the world findeth consolation and comfort in thy prayers?' 'Dost thou know, O Peter, the righteous Symeon who is called the God-receiver,' St. Nicholas then said to him, 'for in the Temple at Jerusalem he took Christ our God, Who was incarnate for our sake, into his own arms, when He was an infant forty days old?' 'How can one not know that which is written in the Holy Gospel, O saint of God?' Peter said to him, astonished. 'Let us both pray,' added the great Nicholas, 'that with me he mediate before God, and I trust that the all-good Lover of mankind will then hearken unto us; for the holy Symeon, standing before the Throne of the Master with the honored Forerunner and Baptist John and the all-holy Mother of God, hath great boldness before the Lord God and is mighty before Him.' With these words the vision came to an end, and Peter, waking from sleep, gave thanks to the holy hierarch Nicholas with all his soul. Thereafter, he began all the more to fast and with fervor to entreat God and His saints, Nicholas and Symeon.

At length, the holy wonderworker Nicholas appeared again to the blessed Peter, this time with a look of triumph on his countenance, and moreover he appeared while Peter was awake, praying: 'Be of Good cheer, brother Peter, and render glory unto God: He hath finally hearkened to our supplication on thy behalf, and lo! the great Symeon, whom I proposed to thee as our aid in our prayers to God, hath come to release thee from thy bonds!' Then Peter looked, and beheld the great and righteous man of the Law approaching him, and fear and trembling seized him at the wondrous sight of the heavenly visitor. The sacred elder Symeon held in his hand a golden staff and was arrayed in the full vesture of the Old Testament priesthood. Approaching Peter, he stood by him and said: 'Art thou he that hath

been importuning our brother Nicholas to free thee from imprisonment?' Peter, still overcome with fear, could hardly reply: 'Yea, O saint of God, I am that wretch who hath set the great Nicholas as my surety before God, and thy holiness as a mediator and intercessor in my behalf before Him.' 'But if thou set us as surety before God,' asked the holy Symeon, 'wilt thou fulfil what thou has vowed? Wilt thou become a monk and spend the remainder of thy life in fasting with diligence?' 'I am thy servant,' replied the blessed Peter with profound humility. 'With God's help I will fulfil this, and I call you as trustworthy witnesses before God to the truth of my promise.' 'If so,' continued the righteous Symeon, 'depart from this prison unhindered and go whither thou dost desire!' Peter then indicated his feet which were held fast in stocks. But the God-receiver touched the fetters with his staff, and in an instant they melted like wax in the presence of fire. Thus, having freed Peter from his bonds, St. Symeon left the prison and commanded Peter to follow him, and straightway all three of them---St. Nicholas, Symeon the God-receiver, and Peter---found themselves walking beyond the walls of the fortress of Samarra. In amazement and wonder, Peter at first considered the most glorious miracle which had been worked for him to be a dream. 'It is not a dream that thou dost behold,' the righteous Symeon then remarked, 'but thy true liberation from bondage. Why art thou yet in doubt?' Then, entrusting Peter's charge to the holy Nicholas, he departed. Thereafter, the great wonder-worker Nicholas commanded the blessed Peter to fortify himself with food, and to take some with him on the way.

Assured thus of the reality of his wondrous release, and rendering thanks to God and to his intercessors Symeon and Nicholas, Peter began to fulfil with exactness the vows he had made to the Lord God during the time of his evil plight. Departing from Arabia and reaching the borders of the Byzantine Empire, he did not turn towards his homeland, but directed his steps toward old Rome. And Nicholas, the holy hierarch of Christ, once having taken him under his protection, did not leave him bereft of aid throughout his journey, but guided him visibly and invisibly, as a sympathetic and solicitous father, as a wise mentor, and he soon reached Rome. When Peter arrived at the borders of Rome, the holy Nicholas spoke thus to him: 'The time is come, brother Peter, to fulfil thy vow to God without delay. If, as before, thou tarry in its fulfilment, know that thou shalt be brought bound to the prison of Samarra.' Wishing to assure the holy

Nicholas of the firmness of his intention, Peter said to him: 'O saint of God, even now I fear the wrath of God for my past delay! Nay, I shall not prove faithless to Christ my master a second time. Be it not so! I shall never return to my home and shall never disclose myself to my own people, lest they hinder me in the holy exercise of my will!'

Then he entered Rome, where truly he was known to none. Before Peter's arrival in that city, St. Nicholas appeared to the pope in a dream in which, taking Peter by the hand and showing him to that hierarch, he recounted all in detail, and moreover revealed his very name, and furthermore commanded him to invest Peter in the monastic habit without delay, at the tomb of St. Peter, the pre-eminent Apostle. The pope, rising from sleep, pondered long on what he had seen that night. When the time of the Liturgy arrived, he made his way to the Church. It was a Sunday, and Peter arrived at the Church of the pre-eminent Apostle amid a throng of many other pilgrims. The pope examined the assembled pilgrims attentively, wishing to recognize the man he had beheld in his dream, and no sooner did he descry him in the midst of that multitude, than he straightway motioned to him to approach. Twice or thrice the pope did this, but Peter did not understand him. At length, realizing that Peter was heedless of his gesticulations, the pope called to him by name: 'I am speaking to thee, O Peter, who hast arrived from Greece, whom the great wonderworker Nicholas took from the prison of Somarra! Why dost thou not wish to approach me when I call thee?' Peter was astonished at how readily the pope recognized him, a man he had never seen before, and with much humility he replied: 'I am thy servant, O most blessed Master!' 'Marvel not, brother Peter,' the pope then said to him, 'that I call thee by name. Last night our great father Nicholas appeared to me in a dream and related in detail thy sufferings in the prison of Somarra and thy deliverance therefrom; and he disclosed unto me thy name and thy desire to take upon thyself the angelic monastic rank in the Church of the pre-eminent Apostle Peter.' Then straightway, in the sight of all, the pope invested Peter with the monastic habit. Thereafter he dwelt some time with the pope, hearkening to his spiritually profitable and salvific instructions. But at last the pope, following the will of God revealed to him, bade him depart from Rome and dismissed him with his hierarchical blessing. Thus, the holy Peter asked the holy prayers of the all-blessed

pope, his father, and wished the latter eternal salvation; and having taken leave of all the clergy of the city, he departed ancient Rome, praying earnestly to God that He ever guide him with His holy will. And soon he found himself at the shore of the sea. By God's economy there was a ship moored there which was due to set sail for the East, and Peter, commanding himself to God's providence, boarded it. Soon after, there arose a fair wind, and the ship was borne on its way.

After several days of sailing, the crew drew in toward the coast to take on fresh provisions. In the house they chanced to enter for this purpose, they found the host and all his household afflicted with a fever. The crew, having prepared loaves of bread, remained there to eat, but mindful of those they had left behind on the ship (i.e., their captain and the monk), they sent one of their number to bring them fresh bread. Hearing that the crew mentioned a monk in their conversation, the head of the household questioned them, saying: 'Of what manner of monk do ye speak?' On learning of the holy Peter, he began to importune them: 'Brethren, I beg you, for the love of God, bring hither your monk, that he may bless us before we die; for I, and my son, and all my household as ye yourselves can see, are at death's doorstep because of the great sickness which hath hold of us.' The sailors, moved to pity by the tearful entreaty of their host, returned to the ship and related to the holy Peter the distress of that household and the appeal of their host. The saint, in his humility, did not wish to go. But when they told him that the afflicted were near death, mindful of the future punishment of the hard of heart at the Dread Judgement (Mt 25:43) and moved by a sense of compassion, he assented to the entreaty of the sailors, resolved to visit the sick, and went to them with the crew.

No sooner did the holy one enter the house and exclaim: 'Peace be to this house and to them that dwell therein!' than immediately---O wonder!---the ailing host rose, as it were, from sleep, completely recovered and, approaching the saint, fell at his feet in tears and kissed them. The holy one raised the host from the ground and the latter, taking him by the hand, led him to all the beds of the ill, that he bless them. Going from one sick person to another, the saint made the sign of the Cross over each, and all, with the help of God and by Peter's prayers, recovered their health and ren-

TO CLEAN A CENSER

by the Noted Censer-cleaner Laurenty von Scrub-brush de San Diego

1. Wear your grubbies.
2. Wear rubber gloves, if you have any.
3. Get one pint paint remover---the thick pasty kind.
4. One narrow paint brush.
5. Hot soapy water.
6. Tooth brush.
7. Scrub brush---plastic, not wire, bristle.

When cleaning a censer, it is best to do it outside in direct sunlight. The sun's heat helps to speed up the dissolving of the tar.

1. Apply paint remover with paint brush inside and out generously ---don't forget to clean the chains.
2. Wait twenty minutes for it to dissolve the tar. This should not hurt gold plate.
3. With care, drain any excess liquid from the censer.
4. Place censer in hot soapy water and swish and shake in water.
5. Use scrub brush to remove clinging tar from chain and dome of censer. You may need to scrub inside of censer.

[Do not use any Brillo, Ajax, Comet or wire brushes, Teflon scrub-brushes, etc.]

7. Rinse in hot clear water. Shake excess water off and dry with soft absorbent cloth. Use NO metal polish of any kind.
8. Your censer should be clean and sparkling. Amen.



AGAPE COMMUNITY NOTES

TEMPLE LABORS

Future visitors to the Temple of the Annunciation will rejoice in the sturdy bridge, hand-worked handrails, and neat gravelled steps which replaced the old board-across-the-ditch and slippery bank, through the recent labors of one of the parishioners and a visitor. Perhaps a more spiritual joy will arise from the continually growing number of handwritten icons in the Temple: just arrived from our non-resident volunteer iconographer Luke Gehring: icons of St. Sergius of Radonezh, St. Herman of Alaska, St. Noah the Righteous, and the Hospitality of Abraham and Sara. Glory be to God! Also, there are being placed in the Temple hand-carved icons of the Agony in the Garden and St. King David, the work of a recent visitor. There is great joy and consolation in these beautiful windows upon the workings of God, and much in them to guide and aid us along the pathways of Grace. Also, we have received with much joy the velvet-bound Greek Gospel for use on appropriate occasions.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES....

During the reading of a not-too-appropriate children's story concerning an Easter egg hunt, there came the statement that the 'children got out of bed early on Easter morning and looked out the window just as the sun was rising...' Four-year-old Matthew said 'But they should have been in church!'

MISSION TRAVELS

At the end of May, Fr. Gregory made a first trip to Atlanta, with Bp. Gregory's blessing, to serve the needs of the faithful there (including David and Lea Pirkle, who had been baptized here at Pascha). Confessions were heard on Saturday afternoon, and then the Vigil celebrated that evening and Divine Liturgy served on Sunday morning at the home of Matushka Joanna Sandiford (widow of the late Fr. Cyril Sandiford). A second visit is to be made as this issue goes to press, all services being held on this occasion at the home of Stephen and Christina Ritter. God willing, and with the bishop's blessing (yet to be sought), these visits will continue on a regular monthly basis for sufficient time to adequately assess the viability of an established mission in Atlanta. Any who may be interested should contact

Fr. Gregory at Agape, or Steve Ritter (404/457-0581) in Atlanta.

This past weekend, Fr. Gregory travelled to Huntington, WV, to serve at the mission established there under the guidance of Holy Trinity Monastery. The St. Seraphim of Sarov mission there is seeking a much expanded schedule of priestly visits and celebrations of the Divine Liturgy (readers' services are conducted weekly), and have asked assistance from Agape to this end. It was a joy to celebrate with these----some of our nearest brethren, at only 350 miles distance!

MEMORY ETERNAL!

Through the good offices of His Grace, Bishop Laurus of Holy Trinity Monastery, Agape Community has received a bequest of \$1,000 from the estate of the late Antonie Churkin of blessed memory. This bequest has been designated for the retirement of some of the capital-purchase debt of the St. John of Kronstadt Press, and is received with much gratitude.

CONFERENCE PLANS

God willing, the entire parish community at Agape will travel to Mt. Holly Springs next month for the 1981 Orthodox Conference to be held there. No one yet knows quite how the necessary funds are going to be found for the remainder of the costs...but we all trust that it will be possible. Consequently, there are likely to be no services at Agape during that week and, possibly, on the weekends preceding and following the Conference (19 and 26 July, N.S.). Travellers who may be planning to stop here during the latter part of July should be in touch well in advance, that we may be aware of their plans in making our own.

FOOTNOTE ON UGANDA

While one contribution toward shipment costs for clothing to our brethren in Uganda has been received, and large quantities of clothing are on hand and available for shipment, we delay to do so: prior advice was to insure all shipments to Uganda---and the political situation there is so unstable that the postal service will not issue insurance on such shipments. Several shipments have been made by others with whom we are familiar, and no confirmation has yet been received that any of those shipments ever received their intended destinations. So...while we will continue to receive donations for the purpose, we will delay actually making shipments until some way can be found for the purpose which at least has reasonable hope of effectiveness.

dered glory to God, Who had afflicted them for a time but had then sent them so ready a healer. Then the sailors, together with Peter, returned to the ship and related the miracle wrought by Peter to the captain; and all, glorifying God, fell at the saint's feet and besought his prayers and blessing, which he did not refuse them. But the head of the household, who had been healed, took up wheat, wine, and oil and, accompanied by all who had been cured, followed after Peter, came to the ship, and besought his holy benefactor to accept his meagre gifts. The man of God praised his good intention, but would not take the gifts, admonishing them to direct their gratitude to God, not to him; and only at the fervent entreaty of both the healed and the crew did he accept a small portion of what was offered to him. This meagre but heartfelt offering he gave to the crew, that they divide it amongst all that were on the ship. The grateful household, having presented their gifts to the holy one, returned home with ineffable joy, glorifying God and giving thanks to the venerable one. Then the ship continued on its way and all who sailed in it, full of joy, reverently related to one another the wonder worked by the holy Peter; moreover, they marvelled greatly at his boundless abstinence, since for whole days at a time he ate but a small piece of bread, and drank a small cup of water.

As the voyage continued, the crew again hove in to shore to take on supplies. The holy Peter desired to rest and sleep on shore there for a while, and no sooner had a light sleep closed his eyes than there appeared to him the Queen of Heaven and earth, resplendent in heavenly glory, accompanied by St. Nicholas who, standing before her with great fear and reverence, besought her thus: 'O Mistress Theotokos, Sovereign Lady of the world! Since by thine intercession before thy Son and our God thou didst free this thy servant from his bitter bondage, show him also a place where he might readily fulfil the will of God for the rest of his life, as he himself hath promised!' 'For the fair service of God,' the all-holy Theotokos said to St. Nicholas, 'there is no better place than Mount Athos, which I have received from my Son and God as inheritance, that they who desire to forsake the cares and tumults of the world might repair there and serve God in peace without hindrance. Henceforth, this mountain shall be called my garden. Greatly do I love this place, and the time will come when, from end to end, from north to south, it will be filled with a multitude of monks. And if those monks will labor for God with all their hearts and faithfully keep His command-

ments, I will vouchsafe unto them great gifts on the great day of my Son; and even here on earth, they will receive great aid from me. I shall lighten their afflictions and their labors and make it possible for them, with but scant means, to have sufficiency in life. I shall even weaken the assault of the enemy against them, and their name shall I render glorious throughout the whole world.'

Rising from sleep, the venerable one was still caught up, as it were, in the divine vision of his dream; but later, having calmed himself somewhat, he glorified and gave thanks with his whole heart to God, Who had vouchsafed him to behold such a great wonder. It was then night unto the third hour of the day. The ship's crew, as soon as a favorable wind arose, unfurled the sail and continued the voyage. But when they were sailing past the holy Mount Athos, their ship miraculously drew up to the place now called Karavostasi, and there remained as though rooted to the spot. The crewmen, beholding this unexpected miracle, were astounded that the vessel had come to a halt, for the wind was quite powerful and the sea at that point was practically bottomless. 'Perhaps,' they said with tears, 'we have sinned in some way against God and He desireth to destroy us here.' But when with weeping and groans they reasoned thus amongst themselves, the holy Peter asked them: 'My children in the Lord, tell me, what is that mountain called, and mayhap I shall comfort you and resolve your perplexity.' 'This mountain is called Athos, honored father,' the sailors replied with tears. 'Know ye, therefore, my children, that this obstacle to the movement of your ship is taking place on my account, and if ye do not put me ashore and leave me in this place, ye will not move a single pace hence.' The saint's words filled the crew with sadness, but there was nought else to do: they did not dare to oppose the will of God, and reluctantly they set the holy one on the shore of the mountain. 'Alas, we are deprived of a great treasure, a mighty protection and aid!' the mariners said, weeping, as they brought the saint to shore. But the holy one comforted them in their tribulation and prayed for them, and finally, instructing them in things profitable for their souls, he signed them thrice with the sign of the precious Cross and bade them farewell.

Alone upon the coast of the holy mountain, the holy Peter offered up there fervent supplication to the Lord God and then, signing his

body with the sign of the precious Cross, he began to ascend the mountain by a certain narrow, precipitous path which led up into the depths of a forest, trod not by the feet of men, but by the wild beasts. And he sought to find a place which corresponded completely to the inclinations of his soul, i.e., one that was in every respect conducive to profound hesychasm. With great effort and much labor, he came at length to the summit of the mountain. Gazing over the many mountains and valleys, gorges and cliffs of Athos, the saint found at last a certain deep and dark cave, and though its mouth was cloaked with dense vegetation, it was quite capable of sustaining human habitation. In the cave, however, a countless multitude of adders and venomous serpents had made their nests, as well as a great number of demons. No sooner did the demons catch sight of the holy one approaching their den, than they rose up against him with all their malice; but despite their evil, he was determined to make his abode in that divinely wrought shelter, for he had found it to accord most closely to his holy thought. Thus, calling upon the omnipotent name of Jesus and His all-pure Mother, and arming himself with all-powerful weapon of the Cross, he boldly entered that cave; the whole multitude of demons and reptiles vanished like smoke. Yet the saint had still to wage many battles against the evil spirits he had driven from their nesting place, and what he had to endure at their hands the human tongue cannot relate, nor the ear comprehend. But let us touch upon this warfare somewhat in our account.

When he had inhabited the cave which had been the abode of the demons, the holy one began, day and night, with ardent love and great diligence, to send up prayers and thanksgiving unto the Lord God, and he gave no thought to food for his body. But could the base enemy of all good, the father of the lower depths, long remain indifferent to the angelic feats of the holy one? No more than two weeks passed after the holy one took up residence in the cave, than the ancient foe could no longer bear his dwelling there. For his assured success, he brought all his hellish power to bear on the battle against the holy one. Hordes of demons in the guise of a vast army, equipped with all manner of weaponry, appeared at the cave of the voluntary martyr.

Surrounding the saint's cave, some of the demons laid seige thereto with missiles of divers types; other wielded spears and swords; yet

others flung huge stones and, in an illusion, shook the mountain itself. And all, raising an unearthly clamor, screamed with fell voices: 'Get thee hence immediately from our dwelling place, lest we slay thee!' Beholding and hearing this demonic tumult and assault against him, the saint had already despaired of his life, for he saw clearly how they hurled stones and projectiles at him. But the all-compassionate God preserved his faithful servant unharmed by the malice of the devil. 'Let me go forth,' he said to himself, 'and see who riseth up with such fury against me, who am lowly and powerless.' And the saint went out and saw that a countless multitude of demons had surrounded his cave. With savage cries the demons rushed upon him, gloated over him like wild beasts, and would have devoured him alive and destroyed the cave utterly. Then the holy one, raising his bodily and spiritual eyes to Heaven, cried aloud: 'All-holy Theotokos, help thy servant!' And the demons, hearing the name of the all-holy Theotokos, which is terrible for them and most desirable for us, straightway vanished; and the saint, giving thanks to the all-immaculate one, again began to fight the good fight, beseeching Christ the Lord from the depths of his soul not to leave him, His sinful and unworthy servant, as a plaything for the evil one.

No more than fifteen days more passed, and the demons again rose up against the holy one, though in a different manner. They gathered together all the beasts that dwelt on the mountain, as well as vipers and adders; and they themselves, assuming the guise of serpents and adders, appeared at his cave and rushed at him with frenzy. Some struck fear into his heart with their dreadful cries and whistling; others slithered up to his feet; some strove to bite him, aiming at his very face; and others, their jaws spread wide, made as if to swallow him alive. What a fearsome spectacle! But the holy Peter destroyed all the power of the demons, as it were a spider's web, with the sign of the precious Cross, and the name of the Lord Jesus and of the all-holy Mistress Theotokos.

But the evil one is ever malicious, wicked, crafty and shameless. When he experiences defeat at the hands of the saints, he does not forsake his malice towards them and does not abandon the fray. After several defeats aside from those described above, about a year after the holy one settled on Athos, he devised a new means to cast down that great ascetic, a very subtle design---for this reason, he

was put to shame all the more bitterly in his evil wiles. The wretched demon, assuming the guise of one of St. Peter's servants, appeared at his cave, and with great audacity began to embrace and kiss his master; then he sat and began a conversation steeped in the most cunning and shameless deceit, accompanied even with tears. 'O my lord, my honor and my light,' the demon said, feigning tears, 'from many we heard that barbarians and the godless, having captured thee in battle, led thee away captive to the fortress of Somarra and, loading thee down with heavy chains, the wretches imprisoned thee there in the foulest and the most noisome dungeon. Believe me, I am not able to express our grief over thine imprisonment. But lo! God hath been well pleased to console us in our affliction, and to gladden our hearts with indescribable joy. Suddenly, we heard that He, Who is all-good, through the prayers and intercession of the all-blessed Nicholas, led thee forth from that vile prison and, under his guidance, brought thee to ancient Rome. Hearing such glad tidings, we could scarcely contain ourselves from joy, and all in thy glorious household, and especially I, thy faithful servant, were aflame with the ardent desire to behold thy beloved angelic countenance with our own eyes and to delight in thy most wise and sweet discourse. Yet it was God's pleasure to plunge us again into profound grief and inconsolable lamentation over the loss of thee: we did not know where thou hadst concealed thyself after departing from Rome. Wherefore, desirous of finding thee, we have travelled about the cities, villages, and desert places. And when we could neither find thee nor come across and word of what had happened to thee, we began earnestly to entreat the great wonderworker Nicholas, praying thus to him: 'O holy Nicholas, many are the benefactions which thou hast shown the world; do not fail now to show them forth! Thou it wast who freed our beloved master from his bitter captivity: hearken unto our supplication and reveal him to us, we humbly beg thee!' The holy Nicholas, the fervent aid of all who call upon his name with faith, did not ignore us, unworthy though we be, but quickly disclosed thee to us, our hidden and priceless treasure. And behold, I who love thee more than all thy servants, have preceded them and come to thee, my master. It is quite obvious, my lord, that nought remains for thee to do save to take upon thyself the task of journeying with me to our splendid home, and by revealing thyself to thy household and friends, to gladden them ineffably. In assenting to this plan of thy faithful servant, thou shalt not be obeying me, but the great Nicholas who revealed thee to us. Thereby

will the ever-glorious God also be doubly glorified. But give no thought to hesychasm: thou knowest that there are many monasteries both within and outside Constantinople, and not a few sites for hermitages. Thou canst reside wheresoever is pleasing to thee. And there, I trust in God, thou shalt spend all thy life in perfect serenity. But do thou thyself reflect, and tell me the truth in good conscience: which is more pleasing unto God---to accomplish good for the souls of many, or the care of each for his own salvation? If by thy teaching most sweet thou savest even one soul seduced by the devil, thine effort shall far surpass the labors not of one, but of many ascetics of the desert. God is my witness in this. He Himself doth say through the Prophet: If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth (Jer 15:19). And thou thyself knowest how many people in our homeland are given over to the passions; who, after God, depend on some instructor to turn them to true knowledge of God from the deception of the devil. Truly, great will thy reward be from God if thou turnest those who are deceived by the devil away from him to God, our lawful Master. And wherefore dost thou so despise us thy servants, by departing from us and concealing thyself in these stony ravines? Thus, what is there left to deliberate? Where is there cause for doubt? Why dost thou not come with thy faithful servant who is devoted to thee, who loveth thee with all his heart and is thy good counsellor?"

These and similar things did the demon say. The holy one, himself not comprehending the reasons for his inner turmoil, began to be troubled during the demon's audacious discourse, and he experienced an unpleasant trembling in his heart. But it could not be otherwise: when the demons manifest themselves to a man, his soul is always troubled; but in the presence of an angel of God, it rejoices and experiences an inexplicable pleasure. Finding himself in such a difficult situation, the saint wept and, washing his face with tears, said to the demon: 'Know, O man, that it was not an angel or a man that led me to this place, but God Himself and the all-holy Theotokos; and therefore, unless it be Their will, I cannot depart hence.' No sooner did the demon hear the all-holy names of God and the all-immaculate one, than he vanished immediately, like a phantom. The holy Peter could not but be astonished at the malice, craft and audacity of the demon, and gave thanks to God and the Queen of Heaven with his whole soul, and began to struggle again with humility and a contrite heart in prayer, abstinence and fasting, so that

he attained a measure of true love and purity of mind. But consumed with hatred, envy and failure, the demon did not cease his machinations against the saint, striving in every way possible to destroy the strength of his virtue and the power of his devotion to God.

Later, almost seven years after the above-mentioned temptations, the offspring of darkness, the insidious and greatly subtle demon, again attempted to cast down the holy one, appearing to him as a radiant angel. Having brazenly and audaciously appropriated an aspect not his own, he appeared in the guise of an angel with a drawn sword in his hand and, standing at the mouth of the saint's cave, said to him: Peter, thou dutiful servant of Christ, come forth and hear from me certain mysteries of God and spiritually profitable instructions.' The holy one replied to the demon: 'Who art thou, and whence hast thou come, and with what manner of profitable instructions hast thou come here?' 'I am a supreme commander of the hosts of God,' answered the demon. 'The Almighty hath sent me to proclaim to thee certain celestial mysteries. Be of good cheer, strengthen thyself and rejoice, for an imperishable crown and divine glory are prepared for thee! Now thou must depart from this place and go into the world, that other human souls may benefit from thy virtuous life and lofty teaching. For token of the Lord's intent that thou depart hence, He will dry up the well-spring of water from which thou dost drink.' To better deceive the saint, the wicked inventor of evil, the malicious enemy of man's salvation, did in fact halt the flow of the water, with God's consent. But the holy Peter replied to the fallen one's wicked falsehood in the most humble manner: 'Am I, noisome and impure, worthy that an angel of the Lord come to me?' And the false angel said to him: 'Marvel not, O holy one! for thou hast now surpassed the saints and prophets of old in thy struggles: Moses, Elias, Daniel and Jonah; thou art acknowledged to be great in the heavens for thy magnificent patience. Elias and Daniel hast thou surpassed in fasting; Daniel in thy dwelling with deadly serpents; and Jonah in the perfection of thine endurance. But depart hence, and afterwards go to the monasteries of the world. There, as the Lord Almighty telleth thee, I will be with thee always, and through thee will I save many. Behold this is the Lord's own will concerning thee!' But the holy one replied to the charlatan: 'Know thou that if my Lady, the Theotokos, who sent me to this place, and the holy Nicholas, my helper in need, do not come hither, I will not de-

part hence.' And the devil, no sooner had he heard the name of the all-immaculate one, vanished. Then the blessed Peter perceived the full malice of the enemy and his boundless enmity for the servants of God; and, furthermore, the mighty defense of God's chosen by His almighty right hand and the impotence of the foe in their regard. 'O Christ Jesus, my Lord and God,' the holy Peter uttered from the depths of his soul after the demon had departed from him, 'lo! mine enemy, the devil, roaring like a lion, doth go forth, seeking to devour me, a sinner. But, O Lord, do Thou not forsake me all the days of my life, in Thine almighty aid!'

That very night the holy Peter was vouchsafed heavenly consolation: in a dream, the Theotokos, the ready helper of all Christians, and the great St. Nicholas appeared to him. 'Peter,' the holy lady said to him then, 'henceforth fear not the wicked wiles of the enemy, for God is with thee. Tomorrow a true angel of the Lord will be sent to thee with heavenly sustenance and, at God's command, he will appear to thee therewith every forty days. He will show thee that Manna which will be thy food throughout thy life.' (*) Thus, having consoled her servant, the Mistress of the world departed into her celestial habitations. The holy Peter, rousing himself, fell reverently to the ground upon which the all-pure feet of the all-holy Theotokos and the great St. Nicholas had stood and, kissing the ground, he cried aloud in gratitude to God for accounting him worthy to behold such awesome mysteries. In the morning, the angel of God Most High indeed did appear to the holy Peter with heavenly sustenance: he showed him Manna, as the all-immaculate one had said, and flew away to the heavens. Therefore, the saint, glorifying Christ God and His all-immaculate Mother, peacefully struggled in his angelic feats for all of fifty-three years and, by God's grace, was no longer plagued by any demonic visitations. In the course of so many years, he never

(*) This heavenly sustenance, brought to St. Peter every forty days by an angel, was the communion of the all-pure, life-creating Mysterious of Christ. That is, the holy angel appointed for this task appeared to him at the time designated by God and gave him Communion, as had also been the case with those desert ascetics whom St. Paphnutius found in the wilderness (see his Life under June 12th). But manna was corporeal food. For this reason (as will be seen below) St. Peter did not request the hunter who discovered him in accordance with God's intent to bring him the sanctified Bread, as had St. Mary of Egypt and many other saints who lived as hermits.

even sae a human face throughout that time. The Manna shown him by the angel was his food; it fell from heaven like dew and afterwards thickened and became like honey. But for vesture, or bed, or buildings, or the other requirements of human nature, he gave not the slightest thought: his clothing was pristine innocence; he was not discomfited by the activities of burning heat, tempest or cold, being fortified by a flaming love for his Creator and God, and the thought of future recompense for all his sufferings. His bed was the ground and his shelter the sky adorned with all the stars. In a word, he lived on earth in an unearthly manner, as one of the incorporeal ones. Before the Manna had been revealed to him, he had eaten the roots and plants of the wilderness.

At length, God was pleased to reveal the angelic life of His favored one to men, and He accomplished this in the following manner. A certain hunter journeyed to Mt. Athos in order to hunt wild beasts; travelling its length and breadth, he finally reached the place where the holy one led his angelic life. Not far from Peter's cave, he descried a large and beautiful doe and, at the sight of such a good quarry, leaving off his search for all other prey, he concealed himself for a whole day so as to bring down that beautiful animal. The doe, as though led by someone, long eluded the pursuit of the hunter, and finally came to a halt at the mouth of the saint's cave. Long did the hunter follow her tracks and then, when he had all but caught up with her and needed but to loose his shaft, suddenly he beheld a man, possessed of a long white beard, standing to one side of the cave. His hair, also white, covered half of his body, and he wore no other garment than an apron of grass. Fear and trembling seized the hunter. Taking this manifestation as a demonic illusion, he forsook his prey and started to leave the place with all possible dispatch. The holy one, desiring to halt the fleeing hunter, called after him: 'What dost thou fear, O man, why dost thou flee from me? I am a man such as thou, and not a demonic illusion as thou thinkest. Come hither to me, and I will relate all to thee, for for this cause hath God sent thee hither.'

The frightened hunter returned. Then the holy Peter, greeting him in a Christian manner, began to speak. 'Be of good cheer, brother. Fear not a man who, wretched and sinful, is like unto thee in all things.' Thus, having assured the man, the holy one recounted to him whence he had come, how long he had dwelt there, and wherewith

he sustained himself and what manner of sufferings he endured for the sake of heavenly consolations; what consolations he had in his sufferings, and what tokens of eternal blessedness he had received. In a word, he described his entire life in detail. Having heard the saint through, the hunter, in astonishment, long could not utter a word. At length, having somewhat recovered himself, he replied: 'O honored father, now do I realize that the Lord loveth even me, a sinner, for He hath accounted me worthy to behold thee, His hidden servant. From this day forward, O servant of God, I shall not depart from thee. According to the measure of my strength, I will serve the Lord God with thee, that He may save my sinful soul. I see why God hath disclosed thee to me.' The saint replied to this: 'My child, at present this cannot be. Thou shouldst first examine thyself as to whether thou art able to bear the labors of asceticism, lest thou later become the object of our foe's mirth. Wherefore, get thee to thy home, and whatever fortune thou hast from thy father, divide among the poor; then, abstain from wine, meat, cheese and oil, and most of all from relations with thy wife. Furthermore, pray with a contrite and humble heart. Spend the following year thus, then come hither, and what God shall reveal to thee, that do.' The good hunter took to heart the counsel of the holy one; dismissing him in peace, Peter commanded him to keep silent concerning the mysteries disclosed to him: 'for when a treasure is revealed,' he told the hunter, 'it is easy for thieves to steal it.' Thus, glorifying and giving thanks unto God for vouchsafing him to see such a saint, the hunter departed to his home, and living there spent the following year as the saint had commanded.

After the completion of the year's time, taking with him two monks and his brothers, the hunter journeyed to the Holy Mountain. When they all arrived at the cave of the holy Peter, the hunter, possessed of a great love for the saint, ran ahead of his companions and reached the cave before them. But, alas! he found that the saintly hermit had reposed in the Lord. His hands were folded crosswise upon his breast, his eyes were closed, and his body lay stretched out upon the ground. Overcome by this unexpected occurrence, the hunter at first fell to the ground, almost dead; but later, he beat his face with his hands in grief and cried out with tears: 'Woe is me! I have been deprived of so righteous an instructor, and have not been vouchsafed his holy prayer!'

As the hunter wept over the relics of the saint with bitter lamentations, his companions arrived and, marvelling at his contrition, wished to ascertain the reason therefor and asked who the dead man was to him and why his lamentation. To this question, the hunter, shedding copious tears, related to them in detail the saint's entire life as he himself had recounted it when he was still alive. Listening to the hunter's account, his companions were moved to compunction and shed many tears because they had not been found worthy to behold so great an ascetic and a holy man among the living, and had not been vouchsafed his holy discourse and prayers.

The brother of the hunter was possessed by an unclean spirit which had long tormented him. But, no sooner did the tormented man draw nigh to the relics of the saint, than the demon suddenly cast him to the ground and, foaming at the mouth and gnashing his teeth, he cried aloud: 'O naked and barefoot Peter, is it not enough for thee, that for the fifty-three years thou hast lived here, thou hast restrained us? Then, thou didst drive me from my dwelling-place and separate me from my comrades. And now, though thou art dead, dost thou also wish to persecute me further? Nay, I shall not obey thee dead!' The hunter and his companions, hearing this demonic utterance, were astonished and affrighted. But in a short time they noticed that the relics of the saint were shining with a heavenly radiance, and the demon suddenly issued from the mouth of the possessed man in the form of black smoke; withal, the sufferer, shaken mightily by the demon, lay on the ground as one dead. Then, in a short time, he regained his senses and asked his companions to enreat the man of God with him for his complete healing.

Glory to the Lord God, Who granteth healing to all of us sinners through His saints! The afflicted man, with the help of God and at the prayers of the saint, soon arose and, sensing that his health had returned completely, glorified God and His favored one with a loud voice and, bowing down in gratitude before the healing relics of the holy one, he kissed them with compunction and then thanked his brother from the depths of his heart for bringing him to that heavenly healer. Yet the pious travellers could not carry in that place. Therefore, taking the saint's relics upon their shoulders, with joy they descended the mountain, entered their boat and, a favorable wind blowing, set sail for their homes. But---O, the wonder! ---their boat, passing by the monastery of Klimentos [which stood

near the site occupied at present by the monastery of Iviron], suddenly stood stock still, and try as they might, they could not manage to move it from its place; thus it stood from the third until the ninth hour. The monks of the monastery of Klimentos marvelled, beholding such a wonder and, to understand better this mystery, they dispatched several of their number in a ship to inquire of the travellers the reason for their remaining in one place. Those who were held fast by an invisible power, although they knew the real cause of the miraculous restraint of their boat, did not relate it to the monks of Klimentos, not wishing to lose their priceless treasure. The monks of Klimentos, however, perceived that they were not telling the truth, and this themselves began to steer the boat; and, no sooner did they direct it towards the monastery, than the vessel straightway arrived at their pier. The abbot of the monastery of Klimentos, having learned from the hunter of all that had transpired with him and his companions, was reverently amazed by this occurrence and immediately commanded the priests of his monastery to array themselves in full priestly vesture and, with lamps and incense, to bear the holy relics into the monastery. Then, after they had borne them in procession, they laid them in the church with much honor and reverence, and thereafter many wondrous miracles were daily wrought by them. The glory of these relics soon spread throughout all the outlying districts. A multitude of people began to repair to them from all parts, and all who approached them with faith received healing of their bodily ailments and spiritual consolation.

After a time, the relics of the saint were transferred to another shrine and set in the vestibule of the chapel of the Mother of God, and there they celebrated a vigil over them which lasted for a full week; and thereafter, having censed them with fragrant incenses, they interred them with honor and piety on the right said of the main church. The hunter and his healed brother, asking the prayer and blessing of the abbot and his brethren after the burial of the holy one's remains, departed to their own homes, all the while glorifying God and giving thanks to His holy saint. But the monks who had accompanied them decided to steal the relics in some way, and for this cause began to petition the abbot and the brethren, feigning a desire to be enrolled in the monastery, expressing a firm desire to die where they had, as by the revelation of the Lord, discovered that precious treasure. The abbot and the brethren, oblivious to the monks' deceit, accepted them with gladness, and they, soon after

their hypocritical entry into the monastery, chose a night suitable for their purpose and, secretly exhuming the relics of the saint, fled with them from the Holy Mountain. The fugitives, carrying the stolen relics, fled as far away as Thrace, and there, by a certain well, they paused to rest and fortify themselves with food; the sack in which they were carrying the relics they hung upon the limbs of a nearby olive tree. No sooner had they lain down to rest, when suddenly a multitude of men, women and children appeared from the surroundings, who loudly demanded: 'Where is the great Peter who hath come here from Mt. Athos? We want to meet him!' The reason such a multitude of people gathered at the relics was as follows. Near the well where the fugitives had stopped with the holy relics, there was a vast and deep cistern which had at one time, however, been filled in with earth, and had become the haunt of evil spirits. These spirits, in their malice, worked much evil against the men and beasts in that place, and when the monks drew nigh unto their den, straightway they issued forth from their abode and entered into those to whom, with God's assent, they had access. These they began to torment and, compelled by God against their will, they announced to all the arrival of the great saint of God at that place. These same unfortunates, accompanied by all the people, went to the olive tree in which the holy relics hung, and with wild and loud cries cast themselves upon the holy relics, endeavoring to render asunder the sack which held them. But the malicious demons instead of destroying the holy remains of the saint, were themselves driven away by the power of St. Peter's prayer, and not only from the people they had tormented but even from that very place.

Moreover, many other wondrous miracles were then performed by the holy relics, for report of the marvelous healing of the possessed spread throughout those parts and brought thither a multitude of the halt, lepers, possessed, paralyzed, and those afflicted with other ailments; and all received healing of body and consolation of soul. Hearing of these miracles, the bishop of the city of Audoros, taking with him his clergy, came in procession to the healing relics of St. Peter. And in drawing nigh to them, he and his clergy walked a great distance bare-headed and unshod. When they reached their goal, they sent up fitting prayer to the Lord God, whereafter the bishop and all with him began reverently to venerate the holy relics. Nicholas, the author of the biography of St. Peter, says that he himself was personally present on this occasion. While the holy relics were being

venerated, countless miracles were performed by them, and afterwards all cried out, weeping: 'Lord, have mercy!' and loudly glorified God Who glorifies His saints, even now on earth. Then, the bishops began to importune the monks earnestly to give their precious treasure to the pious and Christ-loving people of that place, who in turn promised to erect a magnificent church, for the remission of their sins and the salvation of the souls of those who had brought them the holy relics; and for this gift they offered them as a blessing one hundred gold pieces and certain other remuneration. 'It doth seem to me improper,' the bishop told them, 'that this priceless pearl hath no permanent setting, that this lamp is hid beneath a bushel, that the rays of its grace are not apparent to all.'

The monks who possessed the holy relics, with great reluctance and only after much persuasion and even threats on the part of the bishop and his clergy, consented to part with them and accepted the recompense offered them. Lamenting the loss of the relics they then departed to Anatolia. At that time, a certain possessed man approached the holy relics and asked: 'Where is Peter Scholarius? Was it not enough that he drove me from Athos, and now he cometh hither to drive me away from my abode? But, nay! Now I shall set him afire before he hath a chance to disquiet me!' The demonized man held in his hands two blazing torches, but no sooner did he move towards the holy relics with them in order to burn them up, when suddenly a tremendous peal of thunder broke forth, and the demon, in the form of lightning, issuing forth from that man with a loud cry, vanished into the air, weeping and groaning. The multitude of people who beheld this wonder loudly glorified God.

Thereafter, the bishop and his clergy, taking up the holy relics conveyed them with psalms and spiritual songs to the cathedral of his city, and there honored the saint of God with glorification for the space of three days and nights. There also, countless wonders were worked by the holy relics, to the joy and consolation of both strangers and local residents, to the glory of the consubstantial Trinity, to the honor and praise of our venerable and God-bearing father Peter, who struggled in asceticism on Holy Mount Athos in a superhuman manner. Through the prayers of this favorite of God, may we also be adorned with good works, and thus may we be found to be pleasing to Christ, our Lord and God, to Whom be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.



WORTHY TO BE READ....

BLESSED JOHN (MAXIMOVITCH); (Bishop Savva; St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA 96076; 1979; \$6.95; may also be ordered from the Press Bookservise). If you don't believe that there can be and have been saints in our own days, and don't want to believe it....don't read this book. For to do so and remain in disbelief can attest only either to the reader's ill-will and refusal to acknowledge the works of the Holy Spirit, or to a judgement that the author and the many faithful whose experiences and writings he includes are all liars or deluded fools. The work is not a biography in any usual sense of the word (although it includes much biographical material). Rather, it is a compendium of relatively brief articles, testimonies, and accounts of personal experience concerning Vladyka John and the world in which he lived (including an extensive and informative chapter on the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia). The book is in some sense a potpourri...a collection of materials which nowhere else would 'go together'...even on occasion repetitive. But never does it fall into bland emotionalism or vague spiritualism: rather, it is a vibrant testimony to the presence in our midst, even in this sinful and adulterous generation, of one of the chosen ones of God. Hopefully (and indeed, the book itself is written in part with that apparent intention), it may help to lay the groundwork for widespread recognition of a true saint in our midst, whose relics lie within our own country and within at least possible reach of nearly all the faithful. May the time soon come when the countless panikhidas requested by the faithful give way to equally countless public moliebens served in honor of this true saint of twentieth century American...and Europe and Southeast Asia and indeed the whole world!

ST. NECTARIOS ORTHODOX CONFERENCE 1980 (St. Nectarios Press, 10300 Ashworth Ave. North, Seattle, WA 98133; \$15/copy + 75¢ P&H). It is rare to sit down to so thoroughly enjoyable a session of reading such serious works as those incorporated in this transcript of the addresses delivered at the Conference last year. Of the several papers included, there is not a one which is not well worth the time required to read it....and several deserve careful re-readings. Perhaps of just as great importance is the eminently readable style of the authors and the excellent print-quality which renders the reading without undue complications. The volume is sturdily plastic-spine bound and can be expected to hold up well under repeated uses. The considerable cost (the inevitability of which is easily understood here!) is well rewarded in the content of the volume. Highly recommended for all readers, from the least sophisticated (of whatever value that might be!) to the most jaded. True spiritual food is hard to come by in this society, but this volume is surely a feast in itself!

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